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MIRACLEMAN®

Nº 16

ALAN MOORE

JOHN TOTLEBEN

"It's been six years since my rebirth. Though I'd suspected that the people would in some way mark the anniversary, I'd hoped, rather uncharitably, that they would not see fit to sacrifice small goats or children in my name.

"As it transpired, I was quite touched: they made a bonfire on the wasteland that was once Trafalgar Square and on it heaped their comic books, their films and novels filled with horror, science fiction, fantasy, and as it burned they cheered; cheered as the curling, burning pages fluttered up into the night; cheered to be done with times when wonder was a sad and wretched thing made only out of paper, out of celluloid.

❖❖❖❖❖

"A Telex came from Tokyo this morning. Their geneticists have reared a mouse that levitates; a glowing rabbit that can talk. Oh what a world, with super mice and atom rabbits, yet I dream of *more*.

"I dream suburbias where every child is brave and funny, where a green-skinned scientist cackling at dusk or a journey to the sherbet-wastes of Mars are childhood commonplaces. I dream teenagers, the boys with letter sweatshirts, girls with single brush-stroke brows, in endless ice-cream parlors, never growing old or running out of flavors; dream them in moon-chilled jalopies when their sit-com day is through...the delicate perfume of sex and leatherette pervades the air, the radios playing new Gene Vincent songs, new episodes of discontinued but beloved shows.

"I dream a world of heroes and exciting clothes, hoods cut away to show the hair or leotards made out of flags. I dream insignia, dream lightning flashes, planets, letters, stars; of bob-cut women wearing red stilettos, ice-blue half-length capes; of men in dominos, transparent blouses, slashing elegance of line in every wrinkle, every crease. I dream names like Doctor Satellite, Lady October, Johnny Analogue. I dream a world where everyone has sidekicks and caves to keep their eerie souvenirs.

"I dream of cities that old futurists would weep with joy to see, of wharfside neighborhoods where tough kids track down spies, where crumbling tenements contort to teetering and eccentric shapes that seem to spell out words against the night.

"I dream a Picadilly Circus where magicians dressed in toppers, tails, or turbans wave hypnotically and conjure birds made out of steam, or scented fish or flowers that speak in verse for the delighted evening crowds. I dream of an Embankment where tall men with somber cloaks and names like Kismet, Destiny, or Fate will entertain a passerby with stories of her life to come, or chill her blood with supernatural parables, and all the while their hatbrim-shadows hide their eyes.

"I dream of rugged, mustard-yellow monsters from the deep, with vulgar and percussive names like Zax and Rul-Rah-Room. I dream a world of dreams fulfilled, a place where ecstacy and not his brother pain has run amok, and even as I dream I know my dreams are almost true, a planet of attained desire and concrete fantasy that spins and glitters, balanced on the diamond capstone of Olympus.

MIRACLEMAN

BOOK III
Chapter Six

OLYMPUS

"THE CAPSTONE, HOLLOW, FORMS A DAPPLED CRYSTAL ROOM WHERE LATER WE'LL OBSERVE THE ANNIVERSARY OURSELVES.

"'TIL THEN, I WASTE AN AFTERNOON AMIDST MY ORCHARD OF TALL SCREENS; WATCH TAPES OF THE GARGUNZA-CRAFTED DREAMS THAT ARE MY FIFTIES MEMORIES.

"THESE TAPES, COMMERCIALLY AVAILABLE, SEEM POPULAR...MIRACLEWOMAN'S MORE THAN MINE. THEY ARE OUR MYSTERY PLAYS. MEN READ ALLEGORIES INTO THESE CHILDISH TALES, READ REVELATIONS INTO EVERY LINE.

"PROFUNDITIES ASIDE, I QUITE ENJOYED "INVADERS FROM THE FUTURE" WHAT A NOTION...AND HOW TRUE.' FUTURITY INVADES OUR HERE-AND-NOW, ERECTING BEACHHEADS IN OUR LANGUAGE, IN OUR ARCHITECTURE, 'TIL AT LAST WE'RE UNDER OCCUPATION, AND TOMORROW'S COUPS DEPOSE THE RULE OF HISTORY.

"YET, ON THIS ANNIVERSARY, TOMORROW MUST DEFER TO MEMORY. SOMEWHERE ABOVE A DIAMOND ROOM AWAITS. REMEMBERING, I ASCEND.

"THE BATES AFFAIR, WITH FORTY THOUSAND DEAD AND HALF OF LONDON SIMPLY GONE, EXPOSED US TO THE WORLD, AND WE PLANNED HOW TO DEAL WITH EARTH OVERTLY, HAVING NO CHANCE NOW OF WORKING SECRETLY. WE SENT AN INTRODUCTORY MESSAGE TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, GRANTING AN AUDIENCE AT WHICH WE WOULD EXPLAIN OUR SITUATION...AND THEIR **OWN**.

"QUITE NATURALLY, THE WORLD WENT INTO SHOCK. MOST OF ITS CITIES WITNESSED RIOTS BY THOSE WHOSE NEED FOR PROTEST HAD NO TARGET THAT WAS COMPREHENSIBLE; WHOSE URGE TO FLEE HAD NO COHERENT DESTINATION. STUNNED RELIGIOUS LEADERS WORSENED THE HYSTERIA, AND AS FOR EARTH'S **POLITICAL** RESPONSE...

"...WE LATER LEARNED THAT RUSSIA HAD COME VERY CLOSE TO LAUNCHING A PREEMPTIVE NUCLEAR STRIKE AGAINST GREAT BRITAIN, HOPING TO ERADICATE THE SUPERHUMAN THREAT BEFORE IT CAME TO MENACE THEM.

"SO HAD AMERICA.

"SO HAD RED CHINA, FRANCE AND ISRAEL.

"THE REASON THEY EVENTUALLY CHOSE NOT TO DO SO WAS NOT BASED UPON MORALITY, BUT RATHER ON A BURGEONING CONVICTION THAT SUCH MEASURES SIMPLY WOULD NOT WORK. IN THIS, THEY WERE CORRECT. I DONT KNOW IF A NUKE **COULD** HARM ME NOW, BUT WITH THE WARPSMITHS AT MY SIDE IT SEEMS UNLIKELY I NEED EVER **LEARN**.

"SO, WHILE A FRIGHTENED WORLD PROCRASTINATED, WE MADE PLANS...

"...AND LICKED OUR WOUNDS...

"...AND MOURNED OUR DEAD.

"THE CLUSTER MATES OF AZA CHORN CAME TO HIS FUNERAL BEHIND THE MOON: LLANS IVO; UXU CHIL; HRIN LULLI; KANA BLUR (REPLACING AZA CHORN ON EARTH).

"BISEXUAL, WARPSMITH CLUSTERS HAVE THREE MALES, THREE FEMALES, MARRIAGES DESIGNED LIKE HEXAGONS, DEATHS MOURNED BY MELANCHOLY ORGIES.

"HUEY, AVRIL AND MYSELF, AS FRIENDS, WERE ASKED TO STAY AND WATCH. HALF FROM POLITENESS, WE ACCEPTED.

"DESPITE HAIRLESS PUDENDA, HAIRLESS UNDERARMS, BOTH GENDERS HAVE A SPREADING FERN OF CURLS AROUND THEIR SPINAL BASE, THE MEN WITH TUFTS ABOUT THEIR AUREOLES.

"UXU CHIL EMBRACED HRIN LULLI, WHO WARPED INTO UNION WITH KANA BLUR. PHON MOODA AND LLANS IVO KISSED, THEN ONE TURNED INTO UXU CHIL, THE OTHER SEEMING TO DIVIDE INTO AN UPPER AND A LOWER HALF, EACH WRAPPED AROUND A DIFFERENT LOVER AT A DIFFERENT POINT IN SPACE. BEYOND THAT, THINGS BECAME A TURBULENT EROTIC VORTEX, FLESH IN ORBIT, A MAGNETIC FIELD OF KISSES TOO CHAOTIC TO RECORD.

"I'VE NEVER WITNESSED ANYTHING SO SENSUAL OR SO SAD, AFFIRMING LIFE WHILE YET ACCEPTING DEATH'S TOTALITY. AROUSED, SHIFTING SELF-CONSCIOUSLY, I GRADUALLY BECAME AWARE OF AVRIL, WATCHING ME. I MET HER EYES AND WANTED HER, THEN, SHIVERING, LOOKED AWAY.

"THE FUNERAL CONCLUDED. WE RETURNED TO EARTH. NOTHING WAS SAID.

"THEN CAME OUR MEETING WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

"THEY ALL SEEMED NERVOUS. NO ONE SPOKE OR MET OUR EYES UNTIL I LAUNCHED INTO A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF OUR **PLANS**:"

...AFTER THAT, THE WORLD ECONOMY MUST BE RESTRUCTURED, BROKEN DOWN INTO MORE MANAGEABLE UNITS.

NO, NO, NO! THIS IS ALL QUITE PREPOSTEROUS. WE CAN NEVER ALLOW THIS KIND OF INTERFERENCE WITH THE MARKET.

ALLOW?

AS I WAS **SAYING**, THIS DE-STRUCTURING OF THE ECONOMY MUST ONLY BE SEEN AS AN INTERIM MEASURE.

MOVING ON FROM THAT...

"AFTERWARDS, I WAS SURPRISED BY AVRIL'S **ANGER**."

MICHAEL, THAT WAS CHILDISH AND SPITEFUL. THERE WAS NO NEED TO HUMILIATE HER.

WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE **ABOVE** THAT.

PRIME MINISTER?

I KNOW THIS MUST HAVE BEEN A DREADFUL SHOCK. IF YOU NEED SOMEONE TO **TALK** TO, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH.

YES. YES, THANK YOU. THANK YOU, I WILL...

CECIL? C-CAN WE GO NOW, PLEASE?

"THE WAY SHE HUNG ONTO THE MINISTER BESIDE HER, VOICE TOO CHOKED TO SPEAK, HER EYES SO DAZED. WALKING AWAY, SHE LOOKED SO OLD, SO SUDDENLY...

"...I COULD NOT HATE HER.

"TWO DAYS LATER, PHON MOODA AND I ADDRESSED THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING A SIZEABLE EMERGENCY DELEGATION FROM THE WARSAW PACT."

IN CONCLUSION, THEN, I MUST INFORM YOU THAT YOUR CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL AND NUCLEAR STOCKPILES ARE COMPLETELY DISORGANIZED.

DISORGANIZED?

UH, WE MAY BE HAVING SOME LANGUAGE DIFFICULTIES HERE.

GERMANY

FRANCE

UNITED STATES

DOES THE YOUNG LADY MEAN THAT OUR DEFENSES ARE DISORGANIZED ON A *POLITICAL* LEVEL?

NO.

A *MOLECULAR* LEVEL.

WE TELEPORTED THEM INTO THE SUN FIFTEEN MINUTES AGO.

Ha, ha, ha.

NO, BUT SERIOUSLY, WHILE WE APPRECIATE YOUR ATTEMPTS TO INTERJECT LEVITY INTO SOMEWHAT TENSE PROCEEDINGS, THIS IS A VERY REAL ISSUE.

LES ARMES NUCLÉAIR TOMBENT DANS LE SOLEIL: POUF! Hehn, hehn, hehn...

FURTHERMORE, IF WE ARE TO...

BEEBEEBEEBEE

UH, EXCUSE ME...

HELLO? YES, WHAT'S...?

THEY'VE WHAT?

BEEBEE

Ahh, QUEL ENNUI...

BUT THEY *CAN'T* HAVE!

WELL, DID YOU LOOK *EVERYWHERE*?

BEEBEEBEEBEE

OUI? QU'EST CE QU'IL Y A?

PARDON?

Ach!

ERMANY

JA, JA, WAS FÜR EIN LÄRM?

WAS...?

JESUS CHRIST. YES, I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.

BEEBEE EEBEE

BEE EEBEEBEE

C'EST IMPOSSIBLE! POUR QUI ME PRENEZ-VOUS?

BEEBEEBEEBEE

NEIN! NEIN, DAS IST UNGLAUBLICH!

BEEBEEBEEBEE

BEEBEEBEEBEE

LET ME *THROUGH*, FOR GOD'S SAKE...

BEEBEEBEEBEE

BEEBEEBEEBEE

OH, MON DIEU! LAISSEZ PASSER!

BEEBEEBEEBEE

BEEBEEBEE

EXIT

"LATER, ASTRONOMERS ANNOUNCED A TINY FLARE UPON THE SUN'S PERIMETER. IN NUCLEAR TERMS, THE SUN IS AN UNSHIELDED GIANT REACTOR, SEVERAL MILLION TIMES AS BIG AS EARTH ITSELF.

"I DON'T SUPPOSE IT EVEN NOTICED.

"BUT THE EARTH...THE EARTH NOTICED."

WHAT ARE THESE?

VERBAL WARHEADS I SUPPOSE THEY'RE ALL EARTH HAS LEFT TO LAUNCH AT US.

THE CONSERVATIVE MEDIA SEEMS TO THINK THAT THE WORLD HAS FALLEN INTO THE HANDS OF SUPER-LIBERALS.

ARYAN DREAM OR WHITE NIGHTMARE?

MEANWHILE, THE LIBERAL PRESS SAYS WE'RE INTERFERING WITH HUMAN DESTINY AND TAKING AWAY THEIR FREE WILL.

BULLSHIT. YOU SEE SOME LITTLE KID JUST ABOUT TO DRINK CLOROX, YOU GONNA TAKE AWAY HIS FREE WILL OR HE AIN'T GONNA GET NO DESTINY.

I DON'T KNOW. THE ISSUE OF HUMAN FREE WILL IS MORE COMPLEX THAN THAT...

MICHAEL, I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU PERSIST IN SEEING THE STATE OF BEING HUMAN AS SOMETHING SPECIAL.

DID HUMANS ASK SUCH AGONIZED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FREE WILL OF COWS, OR THE DESTINY OF FISH?

BESIDES, WE'RE TAKING NOTHING FROM THEM. WE'LL GIVE THEM MORE FREE WILL THAN THEY EVER DREAMED OF OR WANTED.

WE'RE GOING TO LOVE THEM, MICHAEL.

WE'RE GOING TO MAKE THEM PERFECT.

"AND THUS WE DRAFTED PURE AND ABSTRACT BLUEPRINTS, FREE FROM MORAL COMPLICATIONS, AND WERE ARCHITECTS OF DREAMS.

"OF COURSE, OUR LITERAL 'FAREWELL TO ARMS' WAS BUT THE FIRST AND EASIEST STEP TOWARDS THAT DREAM'S ACCOMPLISHMENT...AND EACH STEP MET **RESISTANCE**.

NUCLEAR POWER —YES— SUPERPOWER —NO!—

"WHEN THE NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS, LIKE THE BOMBS BEFORE THEM, FOUND THEIR PLACE WITHIN THE SUN, THE UNIONS WERE AT BEST UNSYMPATHETIC.

NO SUPER NAZIS

GO HOME

WHAT ABOUT OUR JOBS

"EVEN SPACEWARPED **TOPSOIL** THAT REGREENED THE DESERT WASTES OF AFRICA DREW **CRITICISM**, THIS TIME FROM EXTREME **ENVIRONMENTALISTS** WHO CALLED THEMSELVES '**EARTH-FIRSTERS**'.

"THEY MAINTAINED THAT AFRICA SHOULD STARVE AND DIE; PART OF A 'NATURAL BALANCE,' WHILE INSISTING THAT THE SMALLPOX VIRUS HAD ITS PLACE IN OUR ECOLOGY, AND OUGHT TO BE REINTRODUCED.

"MOSTLY AMERICANS, EARTH-FIRSTERS WERE WELL-FED AND WELL INOCULATED. WE IGNORED THEM, AND CONTINUED TO REPAIR THE WOUNDED WORLD.

"TRANSPORTING OZONE FROM A LIFELESS GAS-GIANT, WE RENEWED THE STRATOSPHERE, AND THINNED THE SMOG THAT TRAPPED EARTH'S HEAT, ENDANGERING HER ICE-CAPS.

"THESE WERE BUT THE SIMPLEST TASKS INCLUDED IN OUR LABORS.

"YET WE TOILED AND STOPPED THE BLIGHT, PREVENTED THE SUBSIDENCE, MAKING OUR FOUNDATIONS GOOD, OUR EXCAVATIONS GRADUALLY UNCOVERING THE FUTURE, ARCHEOLOGY STAGED IN REVERSE, AND WE WERE THE BUILDERS OF TOMORROW.

"STILL, TOMORROW WAS NOT SOLELY BUILT WITH EARTH, AIR, ENERGY, AND WATER. THERE EXIST FIVE ELEMENTS: THE FIFTH IS MONEY."

HELLO. LET'S TALK ABOUT MONEY.

FOR LACK OF IT, BRAZIL MUST LEVEL PRECIOUS FORESTS, WITH OTHER NATIONS HUNTING PRECIOUS WHALEMEAT TO SURVIVE.

POOR PEOPLE CANNOT PUT THE ENVIRONMENT BEFORE THEIR CHILDREN'S BELLIES.

AND YET, WHAT IS MONEY?

MONEY IS A PROMISE, TO REDEEM THE CASH OF EVERY BEARER FOR ITS WORTH IN GOLD OR MERCHANDISE.

AN EMPTY PROMISE. SHOULD WE ALL DEMAND AT ONCE REDEMPTION OF OUR COINS, WE'D LEARN SUCH WEALTH DOES NOT EXIST.

RICH NATIONS, HONORING EACH OTHER'S EMPTY PROMISES, ASSURE THEIR MUTUAL CREDIBILITY...

...AND ALWAYS WITH THE FORCE OF ARMS TO SEE THAT EVERYONE BELIEVES!

MONEY'S IMAGINARY. REAL IF WE BELIEVE IN IT.

NO MORE.

FROM AUGUST, EVERYTHING IS FREE; NATIONAL SURPLUS TELEPORTED TO THOSE NATIONS MOST IN NEED UNTIL THEY MASTER SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

EACH SOUL SHALL HAVE FREE CLOTHING, FOOD AND SHELTER, ENTERTAINMENT, EDUCATION, ALL REQUIREMENTS FOR A WORTHWHILE LIFE...

...WITH GREATER LUXURIES FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO WORK PROVIDING THE ABOVE.

COME SUMMER, MONEY WON'T EXIST...

...BUT THEN, IT NEVER DID.

GOOD NIGHT.

SPECIAL BROADCAST

"...AND THUS WE CALCULATED COSTS AND ALLOCATED PROFITS, AND WE WERE ACCOUNTANTS OF UTOPIA.

"ONCE THINGS WERE FREE THE CRIME RATE PLUMMETED. ENCOURAGING THIS TREND WE LEGALIZED ALL DRUGS, WHILE SATURATING EARTH WITH HONEST INFORMATION ON THEIR TOXIC OR BENIGN EFFECTS.

"DRUG-SMUGGLING PERISHED, ALMOST OVERNIGHT. THE CRIME CARTELS INVOLVED, THEIR FISCAL BASE DESTROYED, WAGED ALL-OUT WAR THAT **WE** SHOULD PERISH **ALSO**.

"SOMETIMES I ALMOST **MISS** THOSE DARK-EYED MAFIA PRINCES; GUATEMALAN PHARMA-CRATS IN THEIR EXQUISITE COLORED SHIRTS. THE PLANET SEEMS SO QUIET WITHOUT THEM.

"OBVIOUSLY, CRIMINALS STILL EXISTED, BUT THE WARPSMITHS HAD SOME FASCINATING NOTIONS THAT ASSISTED US WITH THESE:

"THEY HAD IDENTIFIED A LARGE PROPORTION OF COMPULSIVE CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AS BASED ON PHYSICAL ADDICTION TO THE BODY'S OWN ADRENALINE.

"PROVIDING AN ORGANIC SUBSTITUTE...A LEAF THAT'S JUICES WERE A NATURAL ADRENOCHROME... WE FOUND THAT CRIME AGAIN DECREASED.

"THAT LEFT THE PSYCHOPATHS AND BRUTES, THE RED-FACED MEN AND ICE-FACED WOMEN. THESE WERE DEALT WITH INDIVIDUALLY. SOME ARE PERHAPS INCURABLE, BUT MANY HAVE RESPONDED WELL.

"CHARLES MANSON RUNS A CARE GROUP NOW FOR INFANTS THAT HAVE BEEN ABUSED. THOUGH HE STILL FINDS BLACK CHILDREN HARDER TO RELATE TO, HE PERCEIVES HIS PROBLEM, WORKING HARD TO COUNTER IT.

"BY 1986, WE HAD DEMOLISHED EARTH'S LAST PENITENTIARY.

"THUS WE HEWED STONES, SMOOTHING AWAY THEIR ROUGHEST EDGES, AND WERE MASONS OF UTOPIA.

"BUT LONDON...WHAT WERE WE TO DO FOR LONDON, HALF DESTROYED, THOSE DESOLATE MILES WHERE INNOCENTS DIED SCREAMING THAT WE MIGHT CREATE THE WORLD ANEW? WHAT MONUMENT COULD WE ERECT THAT WOULD REPAY THEIR SACRIFICE?

"WE RAZED THE RUINS, GIVING US AN AREA OF TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY SQUARE KILOMETERS, THEN SANK OUR DEEP FOUNDATIONS AND BEGAN TO BUILD A MOUNTAIN TIER BY TIER, TRIUMPHANT SOARING LINES THAT DWARFED THE GIGANTISM OF THE REICH'S BERLIN; A VAST EXTRAVAGANCE OF DECORATION THAT WOULD SHAME VERSAILLES OR BABYLON THE GREAT...

"FOR WE WERE DEITIES, ALTHOUGH WE DIDN'T KNOW IT THEN, AND DEITIES MUST HAVE THEIR HABITAT. THEIR PEARL-ENCRUSTED GATES AND BRIDGES MADE OF RAINBOW.

"FINALLY IT STOOD: SIXTEEN KILOMETERS EACH SIDE, HALF THAT IN HEIGHT. ITS PINNACLE EMBEDDED IN THE UPPER ATMOSPHERE. UPON THAT PEAK WE PLACED A MASSIVE HOLLOW DIAMOND WE'D IMPORTED FROM THE CARBON CRYSTAL ASTEROIDS THAT CIRCLE ALTAIR. SOMETIMES IT REFRACTS THE EVENING SUN, CASTING COLORED LIGHTS UPON THE SWIRLS BELOW, A BIFROST FOR THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

"AND THUS WE BREATHED MYTHOLOGY, SPAT FABLES, SWEATED LEGENDS, AND WERE GODLINGS OF OLYMPUS.

"THE NIGHT OF THE COMPLETION WE HELD HANDS, HER BEAUTY MAKING ME FORGET THAT SHE WAS REAL, AND SO I CLOSED MY EYES AND FELT THE WARMTH HER BODY RADIATED, STANDING CLOSE TO MINE, AND HEARD HER VELLUM SKIN WHISPER AGAINST HER UNIFORM EACH TIME SHE'D MOVE OR SHIFT HER LONGINGLY-IMAGINED WEIGHT...

"...AND OH, THE SMELL OF HER, THE EARL GREY SCENT BENEATH HER ARMS, THE JUNGLE PERFUME WHERE HER THIGHS CLUNG MOMENTARILY TOGETHER; PEELED APART AS SHE STEPPED CLOSER, AND, WITH EYES STILL CLOSED, I FELT HER GLOVE AGAINST MY CHEEK, FELT SOMETHING WET AND STRONG PUSH TRUSTINGLY BETWEEN MY TEETH WHICH IN THE PAST HAVE CHEWED THROUGH STEEL...

"...AND THEN IT WAS THE FIRST TIME; IT WAS REAL AND I STOPPED TURNING ALL THE THINGS THAT I WAS FEELING INTO WORDS INSIDE MY HEAD, AND EVERYTHING JUST HAPPENED...

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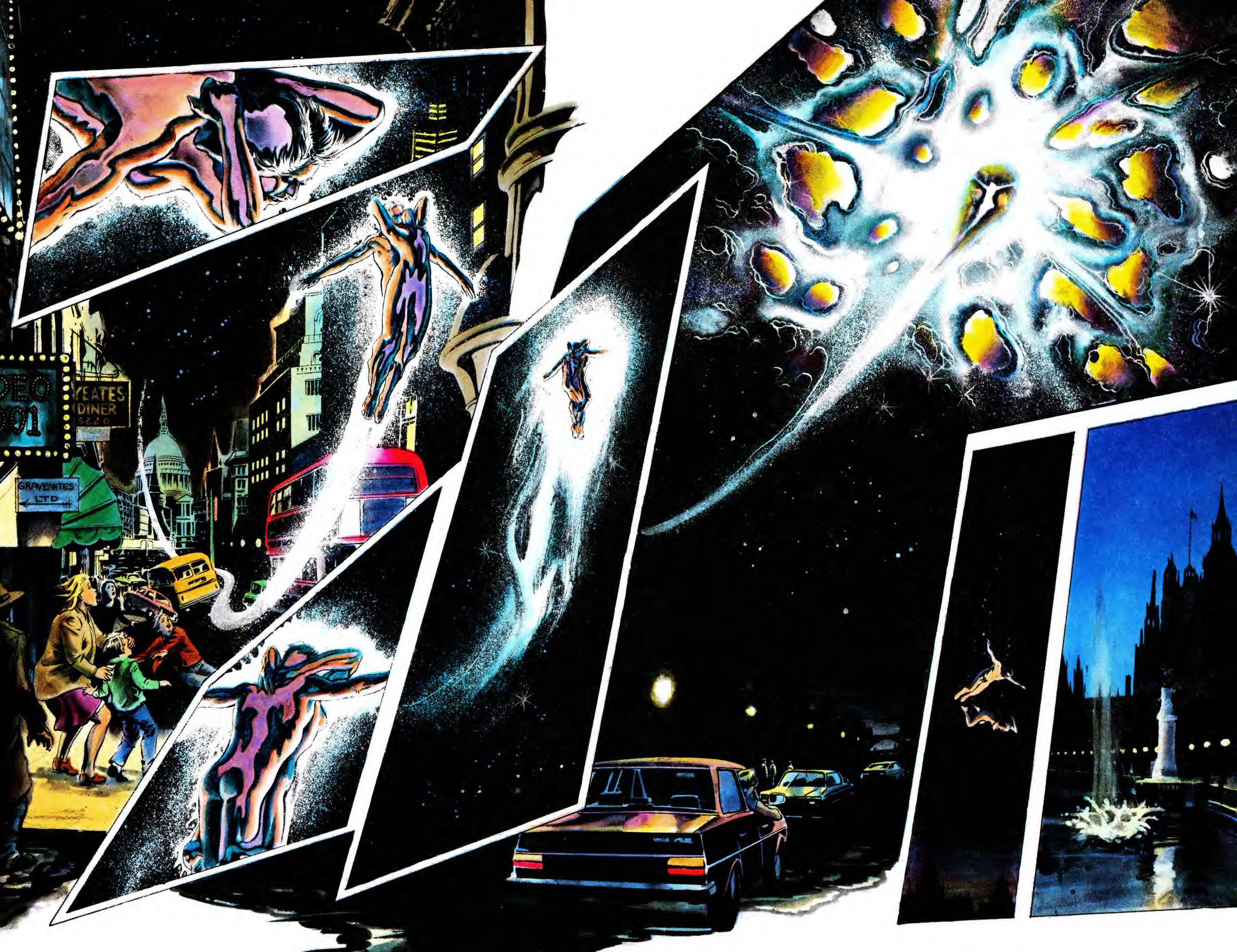
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"AVRIL WAS FIRST TO RECOGNIZE OUR GODHOOD'S POSSIBILITIES AND DANGERS...

"...FIRST TO RECOGNIZE HUMANITY'S AFFLICTIONS WERE IN PART BORN OF ITS BROKEN HEART, RESOLVING TO BECOME OUR GOD OF LOVE AND SET THAT HEART TO RIGHTS.

"FLAUNTING CELESTIAL TRADITION, SHE REJECTED A THEOLOGY THAT FAILED TO RECOGNIZE **ALL** THINGS AS GODS, AND TO THIS END SUGGESTED OUR **EUGENICS PROGRAM**, SHIPPING FROZEN SPERM TO WOMEN WHO DESIRED TO REAR A DEITY.

"SOON, GODS SHALL BE NO MORE, FOR **ALL** ARE GODS THROUGH HER, THE FIRST GOD EVER TO SO LOVE MANKIND THAT SHE'D DECREE THEM EQUALLY DIVINE, SURRENDERING HER OWN UNIQUE DIVINITY.

"AVRIL, I LOVED YOU THEN...

"...AND YOU LOVED EVERYONE.

"NEW GODS: ONCE AVRIL TOOK UPON HERSELF THE ASPECT OF FAIR APHRODITE WE WERE QUICK TO FOLLOW SUIT, CHOOSING WHICHEVER ARCHETYPAL ROLE BEST SUITED US.

"NEW GODS: THE WARPSMITHS, OUR QUICKSILVER COURIERS, FLICKERED ABOUT THE GLOBE INSTRUCTING OTHERS IN THE SYSTEMS OF OUR TECHNO-POLITICS; STREAMLINING THE COMMUNICATION-WEB IN WHICH OUR PLANET HUNG.

"SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY TO VIEW EARTH'S MANY CULTURES AT FIRST HAND, THE LANGUAGE THAT THEY MOST ADMIRED WAS ESKIMO, WITH ALL THOSE DIFFERENT WORDS FOR SNOW. THE JAPANESE, HOWEVER, WERE APPARENTLY THE RACE WITH WHICH THEY FELT THE MOST AFFINITY.

"OUR RAGGED FIRE-GOD, HUEY MOON, TOOK CHARGE OF MEETING EARTH'S DEMANDS FOR ENERGY, CREATING WINDMILL FORESTS; COASTAL WATERWHEELS; CONVERTING OBSOLETE SPACE WEAPONRY INTO REFLECTOR SATELLITES; TAPPING THE GEOTHERMAL PULSE, WARMING HIS ASH-GRAY PALMS AGAINST THE SCALDING BLOOD OF EARTH.

"NEW GODS: A QYS NAMED **MORS** WAS SENT TO EARTH, THAT QYS SHOULD BE MORE FULLY REPRESENTED.

"EXPERT IN CREATING ARTIFICIAL BODIES, MORS HAD OTHER SKILLS BESIDES: FOR INSTANCE, PEOPLE RECENTLY DECEASED LEAVE FAINT VIBRATIONS, ECHOES OF THEIR PERSONALITY WHICH COULD BE CAPTURED AND EMBODIED IN AN ANDROID THAT ENJOYED FULL LIFE WITHIN THE LIMITED SUSTAINING FIELD THAT MORS ERECTED IN THE BASEMENT OF OLYMPUS.

"IT BECAME OUR UNDERWORLD. LAST JUNE, WE STARTED BRINGING BACK THE DEAD."

MORS, YOU'VE MADE THIS PLACE LOOK **WONDERFUL**...THE GRASS, THE MIST, THE HIDDEN **LIGHTING**...

...HOW FAR BACK ARE THE PERSONAL VIBRATIONS OF THE DEAD STILL **TRACEABLE**? COULD YOU RECOVER **EINSTEIN**, SAY?

NO. NOT **YET**. SO FAR MY INSTRUMENTS ARE ONLY FINE ENOUGH TO REGISTER THOSE WHO HAVE DIED WITHIN THE PREVIOUS EIGHTEEN MONTHS.

WE ONLY JUST GOT **ANDY WARHOL**.

WARHOL'S HERE?

EIGHTEEN OF HIM.

OF ALL MY SUBJECTS, HE SEEMED MOST DELIGHTED WITH AN ARTIFICIAL BODY, AND SUGGESTED THAT I MASS-PRODUCE IT.

I ACQUIESCED. IT SEEMED AN INTERESTING IDEA.

HE INTERVIEWS HIMSELVES, OR GANGS UP ON TRUMAN CAPOTE IN DEBATES.

THE CONVERSATION HERE IS QUITE SUBLIME, AND OTHERWISE WOULD GO UNHEARD...UNLESS IT WERE IN HEAVEN.

HMM. YOUR SUBJECTS LIKE LIVING HERE, THEN?

NOT NECESSARILY...

...BUT THEY LIKE **LIVING**.

"SOMEWHERE ACROSS THE ENDLESS TWILIGHT GARDENS MARVIN GAYE SANG, UNACCOMPANIED, 'HOW SWEET IT IS,' AS MORS, OUR CHARON, FERRIED ME ACROSS HIS BURIED, ARTIFICIAL RIVER BACK TOWARDS A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE BREATHED, AND KNEW THE SUN.

"WE ALSO HAD OUR DEMI-GODS AND CHIMERAE, WITH BIG BEN IN THE FORMER CATEGORY.

"WE DIDN'T CURE HIM, BUT INSTEAD REPROGRAMMED HIM WITH DREAMS DESIGNED TO SEGUE HIS REALITY WITH OURS, AT WHICH POINT WE'D AWAKEN HIM.

"IT WASN'T DIFFICULT, SINCE BOTH OUR WORLD AND HIS WERE SIMILARLY FILLED WITH COSTUMED SUPERBEINGS NOW.

"AWAKE, HE WAS SOON PERFECTLY ADAPTED TO NEW CIRCUMSTANCES. FEELING HIS COSTUME LOOKED RATHER DRAB NEXT TO OUR OWN, HE HAD A NEW ONE MADE, ASSUMING A NEW NAME TO MATCH HIS CLOTHES.

HE CALLS HIMSELF **'THE BRITISH BULLDOG'** NOW AND HAS ACQUIRED A REPUTATION TRULY HERCULEAN.

"THE CHIMERA WAS, I MUST CONFESS, A WHIM. WHEN I LEARNED FROM THE QYS THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO BRING A BODY OUT FROM UNDERSPACE BY USING DRONES, I ASKED IF THEY'D RETRIEVE GARGUNZA'S MONSTROUS DOG, AND IN ITS MINDLESS FORM IMPLANT THE CANINE PERSONALITY OF SOME MORE AMIABLE HOUND.

"FINDING THE NOTION LAUGHABLE, MIRACLEWOMAN MADE THE BEAST A CAPE AND COLLAR, WHICH IT SEEMED TO LIKE.

"I CALL IT **FENRIS**, WHILE THE WORLD AT LARGE REFERS TO IT AS 'OVERDOG' IF IT HAS JUST RETRIEVED A CRIPPLED SUBMARINE, 'MIRACLEMUTT' IF IT SHOULD FOUL UPON THEM FROM THE SKY.

"THEN, IN THE SEASON FOR WHICH SHE WAS NAMED, MY DAUGHTER FOUND HER WAY BACK HOME.

"NOT FIVE YEARS OLD, SHE'D BEEN TO ALGOL 3 TO WATCH THE DOUBLE-SUNRISE; SAVED A WORLD NEAR FAR CAPELLA FROM EXTINCTION...

"...CHILDREN GROW SO QUICKLY THESE DAYS."

YOU FOUND THE QYS? THEY SAID YOU HAD, IN THEIR LAST MESSAGE.

YES. THEY MADE A FUSS OF ME, NOT HAVING ANY CHILDREN THERE. THE QYS CAN'T BREED.

ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY DO MATE A LOT.

THEY PUT THEIR MINDS INTO SPECIAL PLEASURE-BODIES FOR SEX. I TRIED IT, AS A SORT OF LOBSTER-THING.

IT WAS ALL RIGHT...

YOU DID WHAT? WINTER, YOU'RE ONLY FOUR...

Heeheeheeheehee...

OH, FATHER, YOU ARE FUNNY SOMETIMES.

WHAT? LISTEN, I'M NOT...

YOU'VE CHANGED THINGS ON EARTH, HAVEN'T YOU? YOU'VE REDECORATED IT.

REDECORATED? UH...WELL, YES, WE'VE PRETTY MUCH REDESIGNED HUMAN SOCIETY AND BUILT A NEW WORLD. DO YOU, UH...

...DO YOU LIKE IT?

HMMM...

YOU DECIDED TO LEAVE THE SKY THAT COLOR, DID YOU?

'DESPITE INITIAL RESERVATIONS WITH REGARD TO DECOR, WINTER SOON TOOK ON A USEFUL ROLE WITHIN OUR NEW SOCIETY.

"THE FIRST NEW SUPER BABIES, FRUIT OF OUR EUGENICS PLAN, WERE BEING BORN AROUND THAT TIME. MY DAUGHTER MADE SUGGESTIONS TO INCREASE THE MOTHERS' COMFORT AND HELPED SUPERVISE THE BIRTHS.

"WITHIN THE YEAR, A TEAM OF HER CONTEMPORARIES WAS ASSISTING HER WITH THIS.

ENLISTMEN

UNLEASH YOUR SUPER HUMAN POTENTIAL

"THE NEXT STAGE IN THE GRADUAL APOTHEOSIS OF THE HUMAN RACE WAS TO LET HUMAN VOLUNTEERS RECEIVE A VERSION OF GARGUNZA'S PROCESS, GROWING THEM ALTERNATE SUPERHUMAN BODIES OF THEIR OWN.

"NOW **EVERYONE** COULD BE A GOD, AND NO ONE NEED LET FEELINGS OF INFERIORITY PUT BARRIERS BETWEEN THEMSELVES AND THOSE WHO WERE AS DEITIES.

"NO ONE AT ALL."

HI.

...AND SO, YOU SEE, THIS SOLVES **EVERYTHING**. **YOU** COULD HAVE A SUPERHUMAN BODY **TOO**. YOU COULD BE...

MRS. MIRACLE?

Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha. WELL, YES, IF YOU **LIKE**. YOU WOULDN'T FEEL **OUT** OF THINGS ANY MORE. YOU COULD BE WITH **ME**, AND **WINTER**...

...AND **MIRACLE-MONROE**?

PERHAPS I COULD TAKE THE BABY FOR A FLY AROUND THE PARK WHILE YOU TWO WERE SCREWING IN FLEET STREET?

OH, LIZ...

...LOOK, THERE'S NO NEED TO BE JEALOUS OF **AVRIL**. WE'VE GONE **BEYOND** POSSESSIVENESS AND JEALOUSY. WHEN **YOU'RE** LIKE US, YOU'LL **UNDERSTAND**.

THERE'S A WAITING LIST FOR THE CONVERSIONS, BUT I COULD MOVE YOU TO THE TOP OF IT...

GET OUT.

LIZ? LOOK, COME ON. YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE TURNING **DOWN**...

...AND **YOU'VE** FORGOTTEN WHAT YOU'RE ASKING ME TO GIVE **UP**.

JUST GET **OUT**. GET OUT AND PLEASE DON'T COME HERE ANY MORE.

"ELIZABETH MORAN, NÉE SULLIVAN; MY WIFE; THE MOTHER OF MY CHILD...

"...I HAVE NOT SEEN HER SINCE.

"OF COURSE, OUR PROGRAM DID NOT LACK FOR VOLUNTEERS, THOUGH OUR SELECTION PROCESS WAS SEVERE, ACCEPTING ONLY THOSE WE THOUGHT COULD USE THEIR POWER RESPONSIBLY.

"IT MADE A DIFFERENCE TO THE WORLD. THERE IS A JOKE NOW, IN JOHANNESBURG:

'WHEREABOUTS ON THE BUS DOES A BLACK SUPERHUMAN SIT?'

"'ANYWHERE HE LIKES.'

"ASCENDING THROUGH THE CENTER WELL TOWARDS THE PRICELESS SUMMIT ROOM, I THINK ABOUT OUR SUPER-CULTURE AND ITS MANY BENEFICIARIES.

"EVEN THE WRETCHED AND DESPISED HAVE THEIR ALLOTTED PLACE. FREED FROM ALL CONFLICT WE HAVE TIME NOW TO EXPLORE NEW CONCEPTS, NEW FRONTIERS, CHARTING THE SPACE INSIDE OUR MINDS AS WE ONCE DID THE OUTER VOID, WITH PIONEERS DRAWN FROM THE HOPELESSLY ADDICTED; PSYCHONAUTS PREPARED TO RISK THEIR SANITY IN CHEMICAL RECONNAISSANCE OF NEW, INTERIOR CONTINENTS.

"WE CALL THEM 'SPACEMEN.' EVERY CHILD'S AMBITION IS TO BE ONE WHEN THEY'RE GROWN.

"NO ONE'S ABANDONED: THERAPISTS HELP FORMER POTENTATES ADJUST TO A SOCIETY WHERE POWER IS EVERYWHERE, AND RANK'S UNKNOWN."

THEN I ORDERED THE SOLDIERS TO KILL THE RABBITS, A-AND THEY **DID**. NEXT, I ORDERED THEM TO GIVE ME **MONEY**, A-AND THEY DID THAT **TOO**...

...A-AND WHEN I WOKE, I... OH, **GOD**, I WAS SO **AROUSED**...

GEORGE, WE'RE HONORED THAT YOU **TRUSTED** US WITH THAT. MOAMAR, HAVE YOU ANY COMMENTS ON GEORGE'S DREAM?

"OF COURSE, THAT'S NOT TO SAY WE DON'T HAVE PROBLEMS: ALL ACROSS THE WEST THERE ARE STILL CLUSTERS OF SURVIVALISTS, REFUSING TO BELIEVE THAT JUDGEMENT DAY DID NOT ARRIVE IN 1985.

"THEY OCCUPY THEIR MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLDS, AND RESIST ALL OUR ATTEMPTS TO GET THEM TO REJOIN SOCIETY. I DREAD TO THINK HOW MANY MORE STILL COWER IN BURIED SHELTERS.

"THEN THERE ARE PAN-FUNDAMENTALISTS, THE ZEALOTS OF BOTH CHRISTIANITY AND THE ISLAMIC FAITH, WHO CAME TO REALIZE THAT THEY HAD MUCH IN COMMON WITH EACH OTHER, BOTH ENDANGERED BY THE FACT OF GODS ON EARTH WHO DID NOT SIDE WITH EITHER CREED.

"THOUGH THEY CAN'T THREATEN US, THEY SOMETIMES SET THEMSELVES ON FIRE, WHICH IS DISTRESSING. MAYBE MORS COULD BUILD AN ARTIFICIAL HEAVEN WHERE WE'D RELOCATE THEM AFTER DEATH. THAT SHOULD PLEASE EVERYONE.

"NOT ALL OUR TRAUMAS ARE SO TANGIBLE: RATES, IN THOSE AWFUL HOURS OF FREEDOM THAT HE SPENT BEFORE HIS END, MADE AN IMPRESSION, IT WOULD SEEM.

"HIS SPECTRE STALKS AMONG US YET, AND MOTHERS USE HIM AS A BOGEYMAN TO SCARE THEIR CHILDREN INTO RAPT OBEDIENCE, WHILE HEAVY METAL BANDS REFER TO HIM INCESSANTLY IN LYRICS AND INTERVIEWS, CITING HIS INFLUENCE.

"THE LOOKALIKES ARE THE WORST. EACH TIME AFRESH, THEY STARTLE ME.

"AND YET, THESE FAULTS DO NOT DIMINISH OUR ACHIEVEMENT: ALL HUMANITY PREPARES TO FLY, DRESSED IN THEIR CAPES AND GAUDY PLUMAGE; A MIGRATION OF EXOTIC BIRDS; A FLUTTERING, GORGEOUS CLOUD RESTLESS TO RISE INTO THE UNIVERSE.

"IS THIS PERFECTION, THEN?

"I THINK SO.

"PERFECTION.

"IN THE ANTECHAMBER OF THE CRYSTAL ROOM, MY CEREMONIAL UNIFORM AWAITS, HUNG ON A PEG OF GOLD.

"NOT WITHOUT ITS PROBLEMS, I'LL CONFESS; BUT THEN, WITHOUT THEM, COULD PERFECTION BE?

"THINK OF THE TEDIUM: A SKY PERPETUALLY BLUE WITHOUT THE SMALLEST CLOUD TO EASE MONOTONY...

"...A POEM WITH NO WORD MISJUDGED...

"...A DIAMOND WITH NO FLAW.

"OH, EARTH, LOOK UP, AND SEE YOUR GODS AT CELEBRATION. SEE THE THINGS THAT FRIGHTENED YOU WHEN YOU WERE IN YOUR CAVES; THE THINGS YOU NAMED, AND DEDICATED IDOLS TO; THE THINGS YOU RENDERED UP BURNT OFFERINGS TO APPEASE.

"SEE HOW THEY SMILE AND MINGLE; SPILL THEIR WINE; MIS-TIME THEIR JOKES.

"THEY ARE AS YOU, AND IN THEIR GREAT MERCY HAVE DECREED THAT YOU SHOULD BE AS THEY.

"OH, EARTH, LOOK UP...

"...LOOK UP BEYOND THIS CENTURY'S HORIZONS, WHERE THE LIGHTS OF THE MILLENNIUM TO COME ALREADY STAIN THE SKIES WITH COLORS STRANGE AND NEW.

"LOOK UP: WE HAVE REPEALED THE LAWS OF GRAVITY, TORN OFF THE CEILING OF THE WORLD THAT WAS SO VERY LOW.

"THE SKIES ARE YOURS, NEW BEACHES MADE OF CIRRUS-CLOUD, NEW VALLEYS MADE OF STRATO-CUMULUS.

"LIFT UP YOUR HEADS! YOU WERE NOT MADE TO GAZE AT GUTTERS, MUD AND PUDDLES ALL YOUR LIVES, BUT HAVE NOT DARED TO RAISE YOUR SIGHTS IN CASE THE THING YOU LONGED FOR WAS NOT THERE.

"LOOK UP AND SEE IT NOW, THE SHAPE THAT'S HAUNTED HUMAN DREAMS AND LEGENDS SINCE WE FIRST PEERED FROM THE JUNGLES LONG AGO AND WONDERED WHAT MIGHT DWELL UPON THOSE BLUE AND DISTANT HILLS, UPON THOSE MOUNTAINS THERE...

"OH, EARTH, LOOK UP.

"AND LATER, WHEN THE PARTY'S DONE, I GO OUTSIDE TO WALK ALONE THROUGH AZA CHORN'S MEMORIAL PARK, WHERE SPECTRES GLIDE AND ANAEROBIC BLOSSOMS THRIVE, HERE ON THE RIM OF SPACE.

"IT'S BEEN SIX YEARS SINCE MY REBIRTH.

"I COME HERE QUITE A LOT THESE DAYS.

"SOMETIMES, I THINK OF LIZ.

"SOMETIMES I WONDER WHY SHE TURNED MY OFFER DOWN; WONDER WHY ANYONE SHOULD NOT WISH TO BE PERFECT IN A PERFECT WORLD.

"SOMETIMES, I WONDER WHY THAT BOTHERS ME, AND SOMETIMES...

"...SOMETIMES, I JUST WONDER."

Miracleman: Book III

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